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## SOME IDEAS FOR THE TEACHING OF FRENCH IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Not all of the ideas that follow are original. Some of them are, so far as I know, and others are borrowed, but all have worked out successfully in my classes.

At the beginning of the first year of French, I try to arouse an interest in languages in general, in foreign lands and in foreign customs. The first lesson is a brief history of the French language. The pupils tell where it is spoken, and we touch upon the differences between the Canadian French with which some of them are more or less familiar, and the French of France.

This year I was fortunate enough to have in my class a boy who had attended school in Paris for three months. He gave us a very interesting account of his experiences there. As soon as he had finished, an Italian boy asked if the next day he might tell about schools in Italy. Then one of the other French teachers told me that she had a boy who had been to school in Finland and that I might "borrow" him. He gave us a splendid account of his school life in that country, and said a few sentences in Russian, Finnish and Swedish. He also wrote some Russian on the board, explaining the characters. Then I discovered that I had in the class two pupils who had been born in Finland, and who could add many instructive facts about the country and the customs of its people. They too spoke some Finnish for us, and that led to a desire on the part of the pupils to hear some of the other languages.

The following day, therefore, a Senior who was in the class, read a selection from Virgil; an Italian boy read a poem in Italian; I read one in French, and also a Spanish selection, and a student of German read a German poem. We discussed the characteristic sounds of the different languages and the differences between the Romance and the Teutonic tongues. Then I asked which language seemed to be the most musical and the majority decided in favor of Italian. Of course that decision pleased the Italian boys. (There were three of them in the class.)

All this really took very little time and it seemed to start the class off with enthusiasm for the year's work. The proverb—"All's well that ends well" is doubtless true, but "Well begun is half done" is equally true. To arouse interest in the study of a

language at the beginning and to inspire the pupil with a desire to learn it, is half the battle.

There is one other great benefit from this discussion and comparison of languages, namely: it gives the American pupil a respect for the foreign boy or girl who can speak two languages fluently, and it gives the foreign pupil *self* respect. He realizes that he has no cause to be ashamed of speaking in his home a tongue other than English.

Having stimulated the interest of the class, my next attempt is to answer for the practical minded boy, the question—"What's the use?" A question he is sure to ask when the newness wears off, when he begins to meet with difficulties and discouragements. To be ready with at least one answer to this question I have "borrowed" an idea. I have the pupils bring into class, advertisements from American newspapers and magazines, containing French words and expressions. Sometimes I mount these on large squares of cardboard and hang them in the room. Sometimes I write them on the board. We always drill on the pronunciation and discuss the meaning. They add to the pupil's vocabulary and to his general information. If he never goes on with his study of French, he will, at least, pronounce correctly "bouquet", "chauffeur", "encore", "table d'hôte", "à la carte", "lingerie", "jabot", "vaudeville", "buffet" and countless other such words. In fact, it is a revelation to him that there are so many French expressions in daily use in this country, and the boy (for it is usually a boy) who is inclined to ask, "What good will the study of French ever do *Me?*" begins to see that it has some practical value. When he goes to the Movies at the "Bijou" with his chum, it gives him a feeling of superiority to be able to impart the information that "Bijou" means jewel.

Having stimulated interest in languages and having shown one reason why the American boy should know something of French, I next make use of a few devices to "sugar-coat" the grind of language study. Only a few, however, for there is too much "sugar-coating" in our present system of education.

When we come to the numerals, for example, I tell the pupils that the next day we shall play a game that will necessitate their being able to count from one to one hundred in French and that those who fail will have to pay forfeits. Rarely does a pupil

come into class without having learned his numerals. The game is "Buzz" with which doubtless everyone is familiar. To redeem the forfeits (the names of those who failed is written on a slip of paper) I ask for the conjugation of a tense of a verb, the writing of the demonstrative adjectives, or the recitation of a French verse that has been learned. Usually the pupils who have not failed have good suggestions to make in regard to the penalties for those who have forfeits to pay.

The game of "Packing a Trunk" is useful in reviewing vocabulary, and for this purpose, too, vocabulary matches conducted like spelling matches, have proved of value. I also have these matches for drill on the principal parts of irregular verbs.

In my second year classes, I have set aside one day a week when nothing but French is spoken by teacher or pupils. Anyone who violates this rule has to pay a penny, and this money is to be spent for a French flag for the class-room, and for pictures. The pupils have entered into this scheme with a splendid spirit and even the most timid and retiring ones have gained confidence and courage from their necessity. To be sure, the other day a boy who finds conversation rather difficult, and who had become hopelessly involved in the wording of a question that he was trying to ask, burst out with "Say, how much will it cost me to talk English the rest of the period?" I convinced him that it would be a very expensive privilege. The members of my first year classes have heard about our "French Day" and are begging me to try it with them. I have promised to do so a little later.

For the second and third year classes I write riddles and epigrams on the board from day to day. The pupils take great interest in solving them, and they learn many new words from the necessary consultation of dictionaries. I often see first year students studying them too, and, sometimes they ask for the meaning of a word, or the translation of the whole. Their curiosity is aroused and words learned in this way, from a real desire to know, are remembered long after others are forgotten.

In teaching the verbs in second and third year classes, after the four regular conjugations have been reviewed, I assign for one day a week, three irregular verbs, choosing first those that are irregular in principal parts only. Then I give a written test comprising ten forms, such as: "that I may conclude"—"he

would conclude"—"that we might have concluded." For a few weeks I name the tenses. After that, I give only the English, except in past tenses that have to be distinguished one from another. This sort of "verb quiz" has three great advantages over the kind where whole tenses are written. In the first place, it tests the pupil's knowledge of the verb in less than ten minutes of the recitation period. Secondly, it requires only a few moments of the teacher's time to correct the papers. Thirdly, it trains the student to think of the verb forms separately and individually, as he uses them in conversation.

In my third year class, this year, at the suggestion of one of the boys, we had secretaries' reports of the preceding meeting of the class, read at the beginning of each recitation. These reports were written in a note-book in French, read and corrections and additions made, as in the case of any report. The pupils took a great interest in this and added many new words to their vocabulary. My class is large and so we appointed a secretary to serve for two days only.

When we had been round the class, and I felt that they had derived all the benefit possible from this sort of work, I changed to diaries. Here again, I used a note-book and had one pupil write a diary for two days in succession, the aim being to make it just as interesting and "newsy" as possible. This work brings in the idioms about the weather, the use of reflexive verbs, the agreement of past participles, and an entirely different vocabulary from the secretaries' reports. I have an educated French boy in the class and I started with him. He wrote a most interesting diary, in a very pleasing style, and the others not wishing to be out-done, have produced some amusing and worthwhile papers. The class will listen with the keenest attention while the diaries are read, in order not to lose any of the jokes. If there is a new expression which they do not understand, or a mistake, up come the hands, for it is agreed that they may interrupt for the purpose of explanations or corrections. I look over the book from time to time and correct in red ink, mistakes in endings, or agreements.

After this sort of practice in original composition, about the beginning of the spring term, I assign a subject to a pupil for a theme which he is to prepare outside of class, with the help of a dictionary. The next day, before school, or at recess, he writes

it on the blackboard. Then in class, he reads it aloud and the class make the corrections. In this way, it seems to me that the pupils learn more than where all write themes on paper. In the latter case the teacher has to spend a great deal of time correcting the papers and more than half of the pupils will not take the trouble to look at the corrections when the papers are returned to them. A few will look at the corrections, but will not understand why they were made, and will not ask. The subjects of the blackboard themes are varied with an idea of constantly enlarging the pupil's vocabulary. A letter to a friend who is ill with the "grippe"; an account of a week's vacation in the country, in the mountains, at the shore; a theatre party; a dinner in a restaurant; winter sports.

Another device that I use in second and third year classes, is in connection with the "Bulletin de L'Union Panamericaine" published in Washington, D. C. This is a wonderfully interesting and instructive magazine. The students take it from my desk, and learn many new words, simply by studying the titles of the fine pictures and illustrations. But in addition to this, I ask a pupil to read something in the magazine and to report on it to the class the next day. In the third year French he gives his résumé of the article in French; in the second year, in English, but in both cases when he has finished, he goes to the board and writes two or three new and important words found in the article and he explains their meaning to the class.

There is one part of the magazine devoted to recent inventions, just a paragraph about each, and a picture. The boys usually select one of these and their science vocabulary has been brought up to date. They have learned the French for "horse-power", "apparatus", "magnet", "motor vehicle", "gasoline", "at the rate of" and the terms that have to do with aviation. This takes only a few minutes at the beginning of the recitation.

The Drawing Department of the school has co-operated with us and the pupils there have enlarged in pen and ink, also in water color, some simple pictures taken from books and magazines. These, mounted on cardboard and hung on the wall, furnish a varied material for conversation.

As I said at the beginning of this paper, I cannot claim that all of these ideas are new and original. Perhaps none of them are

for one often thinks that he is discovering America when he is only finding it again, but I hope that some of them at least may prove as helpful to other teachers of French as they have to me.

KATHARINE G. POWERS.

Fitchburg High School.

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